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support since all nationalist groups will join in a solid front to struggle for peace and national sovereignty." Of significance about this editorial is that it carries the byline of Senator Ton That Dinh who was successfully reelected on the An Quang-backed slate of Vu Van Mau.

3. Fairness of the Elections. Despite pre-election fears, comments of editorialists and others on the elections indicate that they were conducted fairly. For example, widely read and strongly oppositionist Tin Sang called the elections "100 per cent sincere," adding that "the steering hand of the Administration was not present." At the other end of the press spectrum, hawkish, Northern Catholic Xay Dung described the results as "eloquent evidence the election was conducted fairly." Anti-American Thach Do, declared: "There was no significant fraud." Sensationalist Trang Den stated that the election "came out as expected" and cited this as evidence for confidence in the fairness of the election. Nguyen Tu Ban, an Independent Senator who managed Senate Chairman Nguyen Van Huyen's successful re-election bid, told us September 4 that the fairness with which the elections had been conducted was a "credit to the regime."

4. Although not charging foul play, Senator Dinh, again writing in Cong Luan, seeks to explain why voting was lighter in urban areas than in the countryside. His explanation is that urban voters "have reduced their confidence in so-called 'democracy-building' activities of the Government" while in areas being pacified "maximum participation in elections is still a result of the actions of local authorities aimed at demonstrating their ability to control people and territory."

5. Political Parties and Election Results. The fact that none of the slates entered by political parties placed among the winners has been mentioned by several observers. Sudiste Duoc Nha Nam asserts that the results enable President Thieu to make a "correct appraisal of the real strength of political parties in the country." The paper concludes that the "role of political parties is not yet important in the present situation." National Institute of Administration Rector Nguyen Van Bong, whose Progressive Nationalist Movement finished highest among the political parties (fifth) stated, according to the GVN's Vietnam Press, that religious and government factors had a relatively great influence on voters while political parties could do nothing. Vu Van Mau, head of victorious slate 11, is quoted by Vietnam Press as saying that election returns had shown "that political parties in Vietnam are still weak," adding that "if they consolidate their ranks they will have a better future."

6. Victory of Slate 11, the "An Quang Entry." The first-place finish of Vu Van Mau's "An Quang" slate has been the most widely remarked upon election result. Trang Den called it "an encouraging sign regarding the building of democracy in this country" and concluded that it "signifies that the people

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approve the existence of a legal and democratic opposition." Oppositionist Dan Chu Moi termed the Mau victory "an unexpected event" and a development of great political importance for Vietnam. The paper suggests that now that An Quang seems to be following "a legal and constitutional path," it may be more dangerous to the Government than as a "militant, illegal opposition" and further hints that "something new" might happen in next year's Presidential elections if An Quang develops into a strong political force. Duoc Nha Nam described the An Quang triumph as a "new, very important if not decisive factor." Lawyer Tran Van Tuyen reportedly declared that An Quang is no longer a third force but one "standing in the present regime," although as an opposition group.

7. A good deal of "forecasting" has resulted from the election of slate 11, with commentators seeking to discern what kind of program An Quang will follow. Vu Van Mau is quoted by Vietnam Press as saying that his slate advocated "peace in freedom and progress, meaning a peace without the Communists." However, many remain unconvinced. Hardlining Xay Dung claims that "the problem now which most concerns anti-Communist elements here is whether An Quang's decision to 'enter the game and acknowledge the South Vietnamese regime' is sincere." As if to emphasize its fears, Xay Dung elsewhere quotes Foreign Minister Lam as saying that "dangerous elements" had succeeded in entering the Senate to demand "immediate peace." In another article a "foreign source" claims that Vu Van Mau "hinted about an immediate ceasefire." Tieng Vang carries a story which claims that Mau won not only with An Quang support but also, "possibly," with help from the CIA and NLF.

8. Another view of the Mau slate comes from Do Quang Giai, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee and a hardlining oppositionist. He told an Embassy officer, a little uneasily, that he did not believe Mau or his slatemates would take automatic An Quang dictation. Accordingly, he thought that he and other six-year Senators would get along satisfactorily with the newcomers. Giai characterized Mau as a fellow mandarin and staunch nationalist.

9. One indication of An Quang views comes from Senator Dinh, again writing in his newspaper, Cong Luan. Dinh writes: "The August 30 election, with its landslide victory for the lotus, proved the correctness of the Buddhist drive for freedom, democracy, and peace since 1963... the Buddhist stand... avoids the warring forces, be they capitalist or Communist. The Buddhist church holds that political regimes in Saigon, Hanoi, and the NLF are responsible for the continuance of the war in Vietnam because they follow a warlike strategy."

10. Some other comments: Senator Nguyen Tu Ban commented that because of the election outcome (one pro-GVN slate, one independent, and one oppositionist) the Senate would be more truly representative of the people's sentiments.

Leftist intellectual Tran Ngoc Lieng, Chairman of the National Progressive Force, said that the election had probably helped strengthen the present government. Independent Lap Truong warns that there might be "severe trials" ahead for the GVN because the minority in the Senate might still turn to the streets if they are unsuccessful in the Upper House.

BUNKER

POC 14 VIET S.
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AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 14313

KATHMANDU FOR AMBASSADOR BUNKER

FROM AMBASSADOR BERGER FOR THE SECRETARY AND MR. KISSINGER

SUBJ: ELECTION FOR THE VIETNAMESE UPPER HOUSE

POC 14 VIET S.

1. I WISH TO CALL TO YOUR ATTENTION OUR 14255 ON THE RESULT OF THE AUGUST 31 ELECTION FOR THE UPPER HOUSE OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. I BELIEVE SEVERAL THINGS WERE SHOWN BY THIS ELECTION WHICH OUR HIGHEST AUTHORITIES WILL FIND USEFUL TO POINT OUT TO THE CRITICS.

2. OF THE THREE WINNING SLATES OUT OF THE SIXTEEN THAT RAN, THE FRONT RUNNER (FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER MAU) IS CLOSELY TIED TO THE AN QUANG BUDDHIST OPPOSITION ELEMENTS, THE SECOND SLATE (CAO) IS STRONGLY PRO-GOVERNMENT, AND THE THIRD RUNNING SLATE OF UPPER HOUSE CHAIRMAN HUYEN AND FORMER PRIME MINISTER HUONG IS A RESPONSIBLE AND MODERATE INDEPENDENT GROUP. THE NEXT HIGHEST RUNNING SLATE WHICH WAS EDGED OUT WAS ALSO STRONGLY PRO-GOVERNMENT. THE 65 PER CENT TURNOUT OF THE REGISTERED VOTERS WAS MODERATE BUT RESPECTABLE.

3. CLEARLY SHOWN BY THE VICTORY OF THE AN QUANG SUPPORTED SLATE IS THAT THE GVN RAN A BASICALLY HONEST AND FAIR ELECTION. IT IS A HIGHLY CREDITABLE PERFORMANCE BY AN ASIAN NATION IN THE

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